

# Challenging Depression

## Session 2

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.





# Part 3: Treatment



Judith Beck

*Hot cognitions:*  
the core schema  
or previously  
unconscious  
beliefs about self,  
others and the  
world

*It is vital to be alert to both verbal and nonverbal cues from the patient, so as to be able to elicit "hot cognitions." These hot cognitions may be about the patient herself ("I'm such a failure"), the therapist ("He doesn't understand me"), or the subject under discussion ("It's not fair that I have so much to do"). Eliciting the hot cognitions are important because they often have critical importance in conceptualization.*

*- Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond*

# Helping Your Clients Identify Their Critical Inner Voice

## Help Clients:

1. Recognize the positive or negative events that trigger their critical inner voice.
2. Recognize the specific outside criticisms that support their critical inner voice.
3. Become aware of times they may be projecting their self-attacks onto other people.
4. Notice changes in their mood.



# Voice Therapy

Cognitive/ Affective/ Behavioral Approach



## Voice Therapy

A Psychotherapeutic  
Approach to Self-Destructive Behavior

Robert W. Firestone Ph.D.



# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

## Step I

The person articulates his or her self-attacks in the second person and expresses any feelings that arise.



# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

## Step II

- The person discusses reactions to saying their voices.
- The person tries to understand the relationship between these attacks and early life experiences.



# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

## Step III

- The person answers back to the voice attacks.
- The person makes a rational statement about how he or she really is.



# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

## Step IV

The person develops insight about how the voice attacks are influencing his or her present-day behaviors.



# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

## Step V

- The person collaborates with the therapist to plan changes in these behaviors.
- The person is encouraged to not engage in self-destructive behaviors and to increase the positive behaviors these negative thoughts discourage.



If you're interested in attending a voice therapy training please contact  
[jina@glendon.org](mailto:jina@glendon.org) or visit [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org).

# Self

# Anti-Self



# Self-criticism and Emotion

Working on self-criticism  
decreased shame, fear, distress  
and increased assertive anger



**C**urious

**O**pen

**A**ccepting

**L**oving



Embrace self-  
compassion



# Self-Compassion vs Self-Esteem

Research from Dr. Kristin Neff:

## Self-Esteem

- Self-esteem refers to our sense of self-worth, perceived value or how much we like ourselves.
- Low self-esteem is problematic, however trying to have higher self-esteem can also be problematic.
- The need for high self-esteem may encourage us to ignore, distort or hide personal shortcomings so that we can't see ourselves accurately.
- Our self-esteem is often contingent on our latest success or failure, meaning that our self-esteem fluctuates.

SOURCE: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>



# Self-Compassion vs Self-Esteem

Research from Dr. Kristin Neff:

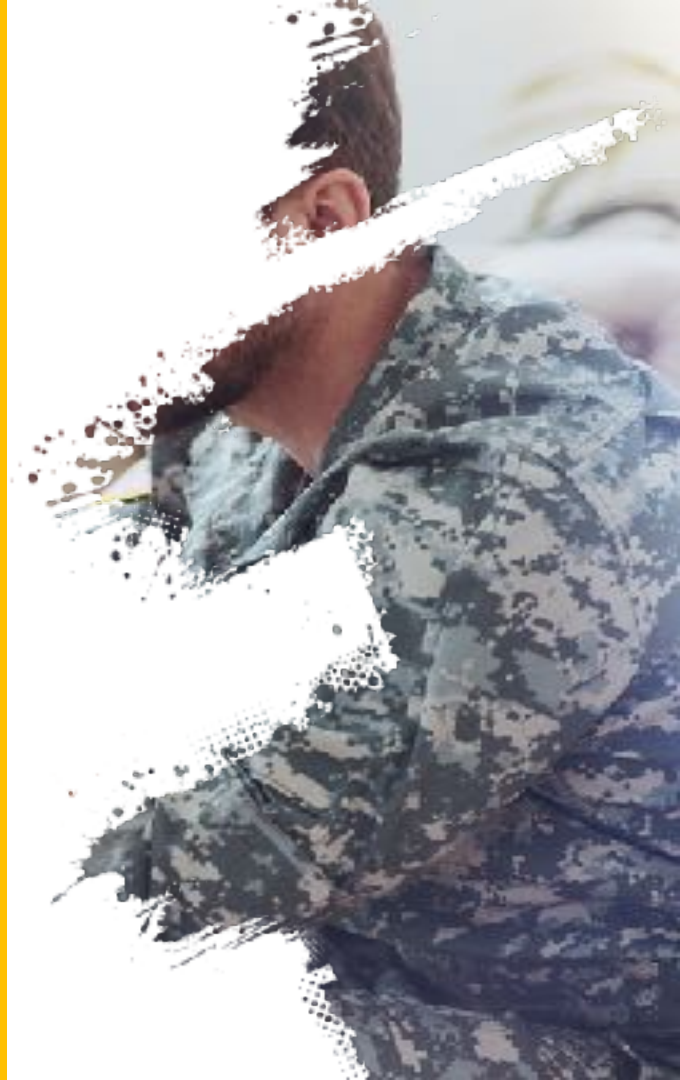
## Self-Compassion

*Unlike self-esteem, self-compassion is not based on self-evaluation. It is not a way of judging ourselves positively; it is a way of relating to ourselves kindly.*

### Three Elements of Self-Compassion

1. **Self-kindness:** Treating ourselves with kindness, as you would treat a friend, versus harsh self-judgment
2. **Common humanity:** How am I the same as others?  
Recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience
3. **Mindfulness:** Being with what is in the present moment  
Taking a balanced approach to our negative emotions so that feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated

SOURCE: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>



# Studies show that self-compassion has a significant positive association with:

- Happiness
- Optimism
- Positive affect
- Wisdom
- Personal initiative
- Curiosity and exploration
- Agreeableness
- Extroversion
- Conscientiousness



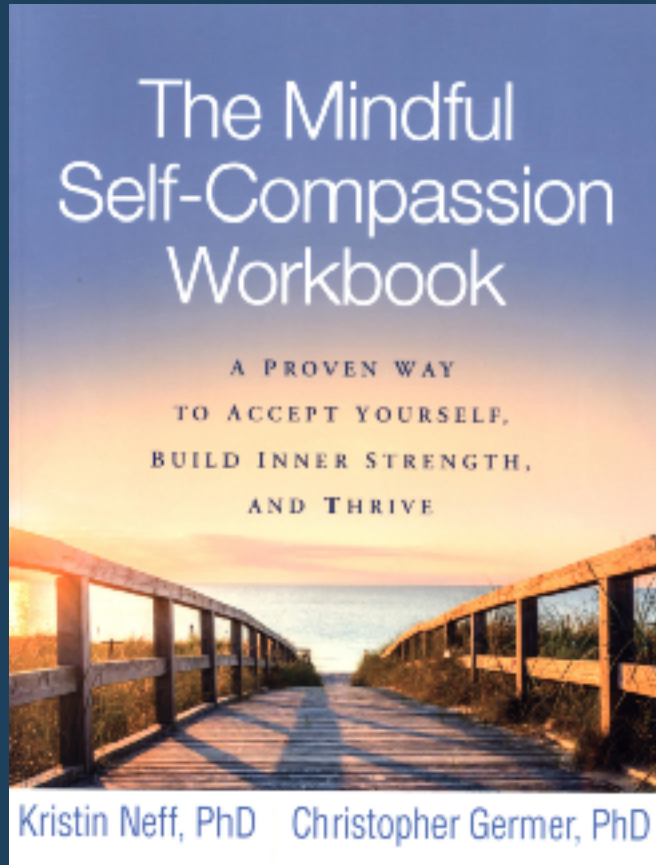
# Loving-Kindness Meditation

- Self-criticism predicted poor response to psychological and pharmacological treatments.
- Increased self-compassion reduced depressive symptoms and increased positive emotions

Source: Ben Shahar, Ohad Szsepsenwol, Sigal Zilcha-Mano. (2014) A Wait-List Randomized Controlled Trial of Loving-Kindness Meditation Programme for Self-Criticism. *Clinical Psychology and*



# Self-Compassion Exercises





# Our Exercises

# Exercise: Who is the Real You?

Write down:

All exercises from  
Conquer Your Critical  
Inner Voice



- Times when you notice you feel the
- Times when you notice yourself following the footsteps of others (i.e. of parents or influential figures).
- What are the things that light you up?
- What are the things you do to please or conform to the standards of others?
- Are there areas of your life in which you act either childish or parental?
- At what times do you lose your own point of view?





# Think of Your Inner Critic as an External Enemy

- Change “I” statements to “you” statements.
- This will help separate your inner critic from your real point of view.
- Do your self-critical thoughts remind you of a point of view of someone in your past?

## Example:

“I don’t feel like I’m an attractive person.” → “You’re not attractive.”



## Exercise 1.2: Your Critical Inner Voice Attacks

Self-critical attacks  
as “I” statements

**Example:**

*I’m not attractive.*

*I’m such a loser.*

*I can’t get anything right.*

Self-critical attacks  
as “you” statements

**Example:**

*You’re not attractive.*

*You’re such a loser.*

*You can’t get anything right.*

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## Exercise 1.3: Keeping a Journal: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

Self-critical attacks  
as “you” statements

**Example:**

*You’re so stupid.*

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The real me as “I”  
statements

**Example:**

*Sometimes I struggle  
with work, but I catch on  
quickly and then usually do a  
good job.*

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## Exercise 1.4: A Plan for Action

Actions dictated by my  
critical inner voice

### Examples:

*Have another piece of  
cake.*

*You should just be on your  
own.*

*You can't trust anyone, so  
don't get too close.*

Actions to take that reflect the  
real me

### Examples:

*I want to feel healthy and take  
care of myself.*

*I don't want to be isolated and  
will seek out friends.*

*I want to stay vulnerable in my  
close relationships.*



## Exercise 7.1

### Depression and Life Events:

#### Triggering event

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#### Critical inner voices I recall experiencing at the time of the event

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#### My realistic thoughts about the event *now*

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My critical inner voices  
contributing to depression

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How these voices left me feeling

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## Exercise 7.3

### You and the Continuum of Self-Destructive Thoughts

#### My critical inner voices

**Level 1:** Thoughts that lead to low self-esteem and self-defeating behaviors

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**Level 2:** Thoughts that support the cycle of addiction

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**Level 3:** Thoughts that lead to Seriously self-destructive behavior

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#### Behaviors I engage in

**Level 1:**

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**Level 2:**

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**Level 3:**

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## Exercise 7.4. The Firestone Voice Scale for Self-Denying and Giving-Up Thoughts

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:

0 = Never   1 = Rarely   2 = Once in a While   3 = Frequently   4 = Most of the Time

0 1 2 3 4	You'll save money if you don't take this trip.
0 1 2 3 4	It's too much trouble to go out to dinner. Just stay home.
0 1 2 3 4	You don't deserve happiness. You're such a creep!
0 1 2 3 4	What's so exciting about playing baseball, football, dancing (any activity)? You should just relax and settle down.
0 1 2 3 4	Look at all the work you have to do. You can't afford to take time off.
0 1 2 3 4	You've always had problems with sex. You should just give it up.
0 1 2 3 4	Why bother trying to get a date? If you don't date, you'll have more time to study.
0 1 2 3 4	Just look at how your friends are acting. They're so immature. They think they're having fun, but they're really just making fools of themselves. Don't be like them!
0 1 2 3 4	You shouldn't be out having fun with all the misery in the world.
0 1 2 3 4	You're too old to have romance in your life.
0 1 2 3 4	What's all this passion in your relationship? You should just settle down.
0 1 2 3 4	Nothing matters anymore.
0 1 2 3 4	Why bother even trying?
0 1 2 3 4	Nothing is any fun anymore.
0 1 2 3 4	Why bother making friends?
0 1 2 3 4	What's the use? What's the point of anything really?



## Exercise 7.5

How Your Critical Inner Voice Rationalizes  
Self-Denial and Giving-Up / What You Realistically Think

What my critical inner voice says is

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## Exercise 7.6 The Firestone Voice Scale for Isolation

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:

0 = Never    1 = Rarely    2 = Once in a While    3 = Frequently    4 = Most of the Time

0 1 2 3 4

Wouldn't it be great to go off by yourself and be able to read or watch TV with no one interrupting?

0 1 2 3 4

It's been so tense at work. You need to go off by yourself.

0 1 2 3 4

Why go out with your friends tonight? You could just stay at home and relax.

0 1 2 3 4

You need to get away so you can think about things.

0 1 2 3 4

It's so irritating to have to be around people all day.

0 1 2 3 4

The only way you can relax is to be by yourself.

0 1 2 3 4

You need more space. More time for yourself.

0 1 2 3 4

These aren't your kind of people. Why don't you go off by yourself?

0 1 2 3 4

It's such a hassle to go to that party. You have to get dressed up and put up a front. Why don't you just stay home?

0 1 2 3 4

You're no fun to be around. You should just stay by yourself.



## Exercise 7.7

How Your Critical Inner Voice Influences Isolation/  
What You Realistically Think

What my critical inner voice says

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What I realistically think

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## Exercise 7.8

### The Firestone Voice Scale for Depression

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:  
0 = Never   1 = Rarely   2 = Once in a While   3 = Frequently   4 = Most of the Time

0 1 2 3 4

You just don't belong anywhere.

0 1 2 3 4

You're a horrible person! You don't deserve anything.

0 1 2 3 4

Just look at yourself in the mirror! You're so ugly. No one can stand you!

0 1 2 3 4

The world is a real mess. Why should you care about anything?

0 1 2 3 4

Your friends really hate you.

0 1 2 3 4

Your life is so boring and empty.

0 1 2 3 4

Don't ever get too happy because the ax is bound to fall.

0 1 2 3 4

You should just smash your hand, you creep! You deserve everything that happens to you.

0 1 2 3 4

Nobody really likes you. You're an unlovable person.

0 1 2 3 4

You deserve all the bad things that are happening to you.

0 1 2 3 4

Don't you see what effect you have on your family? Can't you see how you make them feel?

0 1 2 3 4

You're always stirring up trouble, bothering people. Why can't you just stay away?

0 1 2 3 4

You don't care for anybody. You've never cared for anybody in your whole life!

0 1 2 3 4

Don't show anybody how bad you feel.

0 1 2 3 4

Who do you think you are anyway? You're nothing!

0 1 2 3 4

Who could love you? You have nothing to offer.

0 1 2 3 4

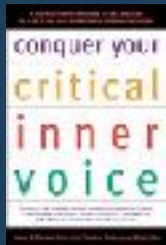
You don't deserve anything.

0 1 2 3 4

Your family would be better off without you. Just stay away, it's the only decent thing to do.



Exercise 7.9  
Critical Inner Voices of Depression  
Your Critical Inner Voice/ The Real You



# Exercise 7.10

## Plan of Pleasurable Activities

Describe the activities  
I plan to engage in

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A weekly report of my critical  
inner voices about my plan

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# TOOLKIT

- Name It to Tame It
- Wheel of Awareness
- RAIN Approach
- Balancing the Mind

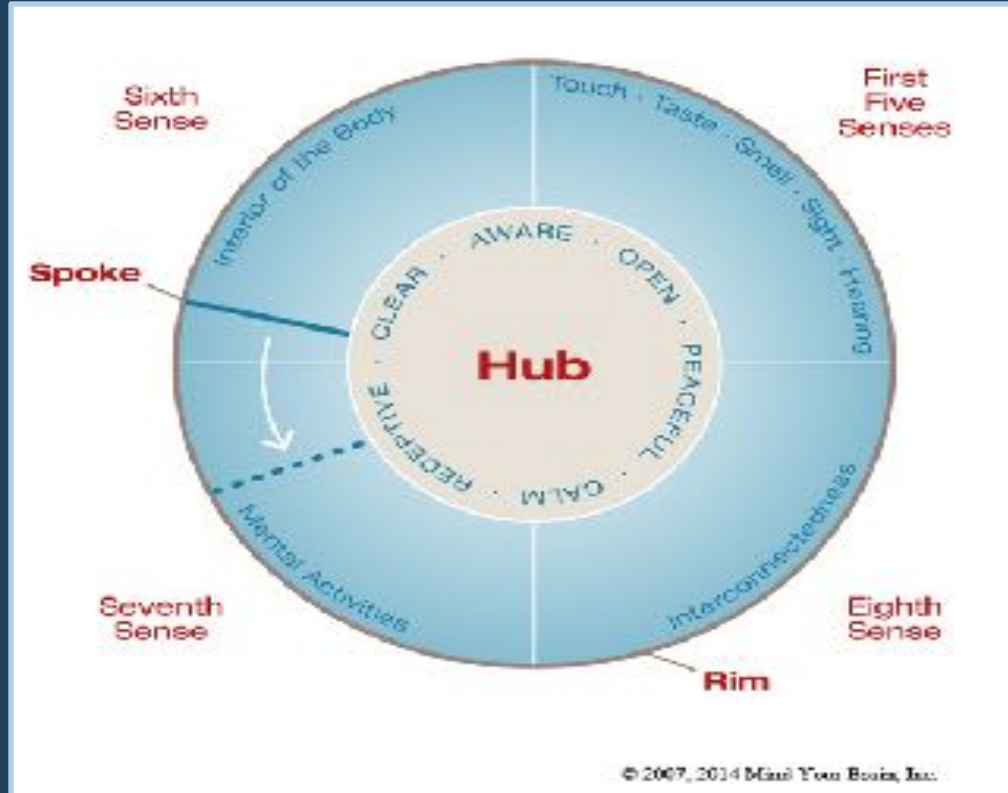


# The RAIN Approach

- **R**ecognize
- **A**ccept/Acknowledge/Allow
- **I**nvestigate
- **N**on-Identification



# Wheel of Awareness



A woman with long brown hair is sitting at a desk, writing on a large white sheet of paper with a silver pen. She is wearing a light-colored sweater. On the desk, there is a blue patterned cloth, a red cup of coffee on a matching saucer, a white tablet, a spiral notebook, a pair of purple-rimmed glasses, and a black smartphone. The image has a white, splattered border.

## Part 4:

## Helpful Strategies for Dealing With Depression

# Anger

- Going inward and turning anger on oneself contributes to the severity of depression.
- Studies suggest that anger suppression, but not anger expression, is associated with mood, i.e. depression and anxiety.
- You can recognize and accept your anger in a healthy way that releases the emotion without allowing it to fester or be turned into an attack on yourself.

Sources: Rudy Abi-Habib, Patrick Luyten, The role of Dependency and Self-Criticism in the relationship between anger and depression, In Personality and Individual Differences, Volume 55, Issue 8, 2013, Pages 921-925, ISSN 0191-8869 [http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/martin\\_\\_\\_dahlen\\_2005.pdf](http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/martin___dahlen_2005.pdf)



# Mindfulness

- Mindfulness practices don't change our feelings or thoughts, but they do change our relationship to our feelings and thoughts.
- Mindfulness skills can benefit people struggling with depression by helping them to be better able to regulate and tolerate emotion.



# Mindfulness-Based Therapy for Depression

- Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy is an effective and efficient way to prevent relapse/ recurrence in recovered depressed patients with 3 or more previous episodes
- Findings support the use of MBT for anxiety and depression in clinical populations.

Sources: Ma, S. H., & Teasdale, J. D. (2004). Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: Replication and Exploration of Differential Relapse Prevention Effects. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 72(1), 31-40.  
Hofmann, S. G., Sawyer, A. T., Witt, A. A., & Oh, D. (2010). The Effect of Mindfulness-Based Therapy on Anxiety and Depression: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 78(2), 169-183. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0018555>



# Activity

2017 study concluded there should be a greater emphasis on physical activity in depression treatment guidelines



Source: Hallgren, M. et al. Treatment guidelines for depression: Greater emphasis on physical activity is needed. *European Psychiatry*, Volume 40 , 1 - 3

# Exercise and Depression

Penny McCullagh, Ph.D.

- Beneficial antidepressant both immediately and long term
- Although exercise significantly decreased depression across all ages, the older people were, the greater the decrease.
- Most powerful antidepressant effect occurred with the combination of exercise and psychotherapy.



# Exercise Interventions as the Primary Treatment for Depression (2020 Study)

- Supervised aerobic exercise and high-intensity PRT may be efficacious in treating depressive disorders, even without the use of antidepressants.
- Supervised aerobic exercise at a duration of 30–60 min per session, three to five times a week for 12–16 weeks is recommended for adult depressed patients, while high-intensity PRT at a duration of 40–60 min per session, three times a week for 10–16 weeks is recommended for the elderly.

# Diet & Nutrition

- Mediterranean-style dietary intervention supplemented with fish oil can improve mental health in people with depression.
- Robust association between both higher adherence to a Mediterranean diet and lower adherence to a pro-inflammatory diet and a lower risk of depression.
- Dietary interventions significantly reduced depressive symptoms, hold promise as a novel intervention for reducing symptoms of depression across the population.



Sources: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1028415X.2017.1411320?af=R&https://www.nature.com/articles/s41380-018-0237-8>  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6455094/>

# Connectedness

- Protective factor against anxiety and depression
- Limited face-to-face social contact nearly doubles risk of having depression in older adults. Those who met in person regularly with family and friends were less likely to report symptoms of depression.
- Building a strong connection to a social group helps clinically depressed patients recover and helps prevent relapse.

Sources: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/03/140319143938.htm>  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26437566>



# Sleep Problems

- Sleep strongly influences both the development and trajectory of depression
- Impacts episode frequency, severity, and duration
- Depressed patients who continue to experience insomnia are less likely to respond to treatment.
- Sleep-related symptoms may be important and modifiable risk factors to prevent depression and/or achieve and maintain depression remission
- Evidence suggests that interventions for insomnia, which include both behavioral and psychological treatments and pharmacotherapy, may be helpful in depression.



# Tips from the National Sleep Foundation

- Keep a regular sleep/wake schedule
- Get into bright light soon after waking in the morning
- Get some form of exercise every day
- Avoid afternoon naps if you have nighttime insomnia
- Limit caffeine and alcohol
- Ask loved ones for help – you should not face depression alone

Source: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/depression-and-sleep>



# Activities

The importance of engaging  
in activities you once enjoyed  
...even when you don't feel like it



# Watch a funny show or movie

...but avoid too much screen time

- 2017 study found significant association between TV watching/computer uses with moderate or severe level of depression after controlling all potential confounders.
- Binge-watching may affect mental health – related to fatigability, poor quality of sleep, insomnia, and some mood disturbance – possible association with depression, loneliness, and deficient self-regulation.



# Rumination

- A 2013 study of more than 30,000 people showed that harping on negative life events (particularly through rumination and self-blame) can be the prime predictor of some of today's most common mental health problems like anxiety and depression.
- Self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing and reduced positive reappraisal were among the most valuable predictors of negative emotions, including anger and depression.
- Limit the time you allow yourself to think about negative thoughts or worries.



# Social Media

## Studies from 2018:

- Found social media use increases depression and loneliness
- People who limited their social media use felt significantly better, reporting reduced depression and loneliness



# Medication and Newer Treatment Options



# Newer Medical Treatments

## Ketamine

- Statistically significant improvement over placebo or midazolam in major depressive disorder
- Statistically significant improvement over placebo in bipolar depression
- Shown promise in quickly reducing symptoms in patients with treatment resistant depression and bipolar depression
- May be helpful for patients that have exhausted other therapeutic options

## Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)

- Meta-analyses have shown that high-frequency (HF) rTMS has antidepressant properties when compared with sham rTMS.
- HF-rTMS seems to be associated with clinically relevant antidepressant effects and with a benign tolerability

## Psilocybin??



# Old Treatments that are Still Important:

- Lithium
- ECT



# TIPS to Fight Depression

- Challenge your inner critic.
- Embrace self-compassion.
- Identify anger.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Be active.
- Consider diet.
- Increase connectedness.
- Address sleep problems.
- Do things you've enjoyed.
- Watch a funny show/movie.
- Avoid rumination.
- Take a social media break.
- Take medication, if indicated.
- Consider treatments new and old.



# The Healthy Mind Platter



*The Healthy Mind Platter, for Optimal Brain Matter*

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# SUICIDE:

## Effective Risk Assessment and Intervention

COMPREHENSIVE ONLINE SUICIDE  
PREVENTION TRAINING

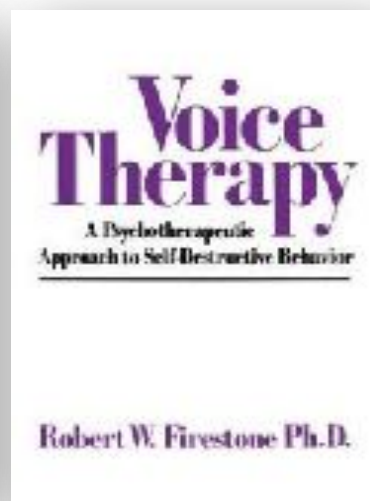
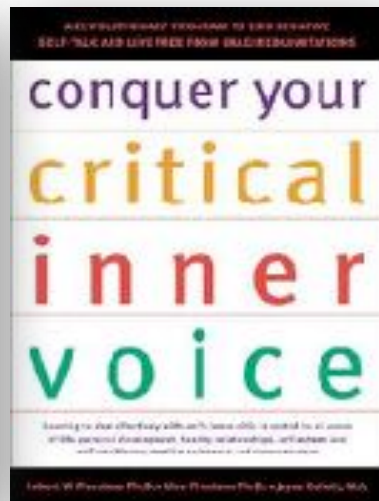
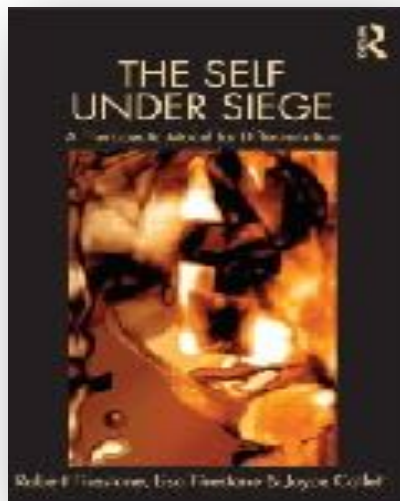
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# Thanks!

Any questions?



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